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METHODS AND CONTENT OF COURSES IN HISTORY IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS OF THE UNITED STATES

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PART II. METHODS AND MATERIALS USED IN HIGH-SCHOOL HISTORY¹

INTRODUCTION

a) *The questionnaire.*—The material for Part II of this article was obtained from a questionnaire sent to 480 high schools selected at random from the cities as listed in the *Educational Directory* published by the United States Bureau of Education.

Name of Teacher _____ Address _____

1. How many volumes in your high-school library? How many volumes on history?
2. What percentage of your high-school pupils are enrolled in history courses?
3. What methods are used in the teaching of history, e.g., topical, chronological, etc.? How do you use the text?
4. Do you require collateral reading?
 - a) What amount relative to the text assignments?
 - b) In what year of the course do you require most?
 - c) How many pages? 1st year? 2d year? 3d year? 4th year? If unable to state definitely indicate here:
Very little? Considerable? Much?Do you emphasize intensive or extensive reading?
5. Give classification and character of collateral reading: e.g., to what extent are references made to:
 - a) Texts similar to the one in use?
 - b) The more extensive works?
 - c) Poetry?
 - d) Historical fiction?
 - e) Biography? If so, what?
 - f) Magazines, newspapers, etc.?
 - g) Other materials.
6. By what methods do you test the collateral reading?

¹ Part I appeared in the *School Review*, February, 1917.

7. Do you consider collateral reading by pupils an important part of the work in history? Please give reasons:
8. Do you require written reports? Oral reports?
How often? Of what character?
9. Do you require the use of a permanent notebook in all courses? If not, give reasons.
What do you require to be entered in it?
Is it examined and graded by teacher? How often?
What do you consider are the advantages and disadvantages of keeping a notebook?
Please give any suggestions you have found helpful.
10. Do you use source materials? To what extent?
In what manner?
Character of sources used?
Aim or purpose?
11. Is map drawing required in all history courses? How many maps?
How are they prepared?
Data entered in them?
Purpose?
12. What special devices are used to aid in locating and correlating events in time?
13. To what extent do you require the memorizing of dates?
14. What special devices are used in the teaching of civics to secure concreteness and motivation?
15. Do you attempt to correlate history with other subjects? If so, what and by what methods?
Make any additional suggestions regarding devices, method, etc. which you consider helpful in the teaching of history, and which have proven successful in your work.

In response to this questionnaire 135 replies were received from teachers representing 60 high schools or high-school systems in the North Central states, 30 in the North Atlantic, 30 in the Western, 11 in the South Central, and 4 in the South Atlantic states. The data on each question will be treated in exactly the same order as treated in the questionnaire, each question being considered as a separate unit.

b) *Supplementary material.*—The median as well as the modal high-school library contains 1,500 volumes. The modal number of volumes on history was 200, the median 300. Historical works constituted approximately one-fourth of the total volumes in the libraries. The Commission on Accredited Schools and Colleges of

the North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges recommends that the minimum number of volumes on history a high-school library should contain is 175, well chosen—20 volumes on ancient, 25 on mediaeval and modern, 50 on English, and 75 on American history. The facts are that not one-half have reached this standard for the minimum requirement.

c) *Number enrolled in courses in history.*—This question was answered by 129 teachers, the answers show a variation of from 20 per cent to 100 per cent, the mode being 50 per cent. This shows that at any given time approximately one-half of all high-school pupils are enrolled in history courses.

METHODS OF TEACHING HISTORY

It seems that the most prevalent methods are "topical" and "chronological," with the greater emphasis on the former. Only three replies mentioned the "quiz" method, but there is little doubt that this method is used by all teachers. From the small number of different methods reported it is evident that many teachers are not familiar with the technical names for the various methods of teaching. Only three teachers mentioned the syllabus and library method, while only one mentioned the problem method. In the opinion of the writer the latter method is one of the most effective means of teaching history.

a) *How the textbook is used.*—The manner of using the textbook is clearly recognized as an important factor in the teaching of history in the high school. Very few teachers are content to risk a single textbook as furnishing the only source of preparation on the part of the pupil. The tendency is to hold the student responsible for the mastery of the textbook as a minimum requirement, which is to be supplemented to a greater or less extent by outside readings on the more important topics. It is necessary to require a pretty thorough knowledge of the textbook in order that the student may get a foundation for the work, or, in other words, that he may get the necessary general information intelligently to discuss the main topics and to be able to explore wider fields.

It is a common practice to follow the textbook quite closely during the Freshman and Sophomore years, but in the advanced

courses in modern and American history the textbook serves merely as an outline. In explaining her method of using the textbook one teacher presents the following:

1. Rapid reading of the textbook by students outside of class: in assigning the lesson their attention is called to the main points they are expected to answer in class.

2. Review of the textbook by topics from the index.

3. A review chronologically of the larger phases.

4. All of this is supplemented by dictated notes and outlines, by map drawing, and by talks on the points where the textbook calls up present-day conditions; also frequent examinations.

Sometimes the textbook furnished the "thread," sometimes the material for discussion, and sometimes merely a "point of departure."

A commendable method is, after having studied the complete textbook in detail, to use the indexes in reviews for tracing topical questions. The history of the tariff, for example, may be traced advantageously in this manner.

In answer to the question, "Do you require collateral reading?" all except two teachers stated that some reading in addition to the regular textbook assignments is required of all pupils. In these two cases the pupils are encouraged to do outside reading, but are not required or compelled to do it. This question was answered by every teacher who returned the questionnaire.

b) Amount of collateral reading relative to the textbook assignments.—In 47 cases there was no attempt made to estimate the amount of collateral reading relative to the regular textbook assignments. In 28 other cases the answers were that the amount varies with the different years or classes with no quantitative estimate for the specific years. Only 10 say the amount of collateral reading exceeds the textbook assignments. There seems to be no standard as to the amount of collateral reading which should be required. The largest amount is usually required in the third and fourth years of the course. In 5 schools, however, the greatest amount of supplementary reading is done in the Freshman year. The reason given for this was that it accustoms the pupil to the historic method, preparing him for more effective work in later years. There is tremendous variation in the amount of collateral reading required in the Freshman and Sophomore years, the amount varying from none to thirteen hundred pages. In the Junior and Senior years

the amount varies from none to fifteen hundred pages. Such wide variability in practice indicates that pupils coming from one high school receive a vastly different sort of training from those coming from another.

The Commission on Accredited Schools and Colleges of the North Central Association specifies a minimum amount of collateral reading, which is to be carefully selected, at least one-fourth of this amount to be source material: (1) ancient history, 200 pages; (2) mediaeval and modern history, 150 pages; (3) English history, 300 pages; (4) American history, 350 pages. Only 19 schools require more than the minimum amount in ancient history, 34 in mediaeval and modern, 26 in English, and 28 in American history. Approximately 30 per cent of those making a definite estimate require less than the minimum standard of the North Central Association. The answers as a whole seem to indicate that teachers in general have paid little attention to, or are ignorant of, the specification of the Commission as given above. In one case in answer to the question, "How many pages per year?" it was sapiently remarked, "Foolish question! It is not *pages* but the 'wisdom which lingers' that we wish the student to get from collateral reading!"

c) *Intensive and extensive reading*.—The greatest emphasis is placed upon intensive reading, although there is a definite attempt to do some extensive reading, the amount depending upon the subject-matter and the age of the pupils. There is considerable disagreement among teachers. Eight say they go from extensive in the first years to intensive in the later years of the course, while 11 say they go from intensive to extensive.

The methods of testing collateral reading are generally class reports, oral and written examinations, notebooks, occasional themes, book reviews, report slips handed in, conferences with individual students, etc.

d) *Classification of collateral reading*.—In checking the relative frequency with which references are made to other secondary-school textbooks, similar to the regular history textbook and to the more extensive works, the thing which stands out most prominently is the lack of any uniformity in practice. Some contend that references should not be made to secondary textbooks, that this is

only confusing because of errors and disagreements among authors. Others have very little material for reference except secondary textbooks. Still others claim that the larger historical works and contemporaneous writings are too complicated and too detailed for high-school students. It might be suggested that students ought to become somewhat familiar with the opinions of the different authors; they should know that their own textbook is not infallible and that it does not contain all that has been written on a given subject. They should at least use the more extensive histories enough to get acquainted with the methods of writing history.

About one-half of the teachers seldom or never use poetry for collateral reading. When it is used, it is usually merely for illustrative purposes or is merely recommended or "suggested," but not required. These remarks are also applicable to historical fiction. The tendency, however, is to use a little more historical fiction than poetry.

Biography is used more than any other class of collateral reading, the tendency being to use most biography in connection with American history. The "American Statesmen Series" by Morse is a favorite reference.

Magazines and newspapers are used for collateral reading to a considerable extent, especially in advanced classes or in connection with modern and American history. It is a common practice to have a current-event day once a week, the whole class-period being devoted to the discussion of events, movements, and tendencies of the present day. Such periodicals as the *Literary Digest*, *Independent*, *Current Events*, and *Outlook* were frequently mentioned. This is a commendable practice and is in accordance with the recommendations of the committees. In this way students are brought into touch with history in the making.

Other materials used in connection with the collateral reading are mentioned by about 40 teachers. Pictures and postcards are mentioned in 24 courses in history, and 16 teachers report that they make frequent use of such material. Twelve schools seem proud of the fact that they are provided with stereopticons. Two teachers mention taking their classes to see the moving-picture shows. In a few cases teachers mention using myths and stories,

travel reports, industrial exhibits, clippings, curios and relics, old settlers' testimony, etc., for supplementary material.

There is no definite standard as to what shall constitute the collateral reading.

e) *Value of collateral reading.*—The following table was made in order to determine whether or not history teachers have a conscious

TABLE I	
Statement of Aim	Frequency
Broadens views of the student (horizon)	49
Makes the work more interesting	37
Acquaintance with views and style of different authors	36
Training in use of books, library, card catalogues, <i>Poole's Index</i> , sources, etc.	25
Trains student in weighing values (judgment, discrimination)	22
To illuminate and supplement the text	20
Furnishes wider <i>general knowledge</i>	18
Cultivates independence in study and thought	14
Knowledge of books	11
Tends to stimulate a conservative liberalism	10
To create the habit of reading	10
Necessary in the acquirement of historical background	9
To get the setting of events and make history real and vital	8
To show how much might be known	8
To create the spirit of investigation	8
To verify the text	7
Current events are necessary to understand progress	7
To cultivate a taste for good reading	6
Furnishes maximum of information with minimum effort	6
Correlates history with other subjects and everyday life	6
Knowledge of the great authorities	5
Biography vitalizes the study	4
Fixes important topics and clinches essentials	4
An opportunity to adapt amount of work to individual pupils	3
To develop character—the moral sense	2
Reading with a point of view is liberalizing	1
Tends toward college method	1
Poetry and fiction to arouse the love of the beautiful	1
Furnishes points of contact in teaching	1
Directs one's interests in after-life	1
Broadens the vocabulary	1

purpose or definite aim in using the materials not found in the regular textbook. Only 8 of the 135 teachers fail to give an

evaluation. This table ought to be helpful to teachers in working out a clearly defined aim.

In answer to the question, "Do you consider collateral reading by pupils an important part of the work in history?" only 6 teachers answered "No," the principal reasons being, (1) that students take little interest in it because it means additional burden, (2) that it causes pupils to become superficial in study, hence it is better to master the textbook, and (3) that students are too immature. There is a general feeling on the part of many teachers that there is a danger of overdoing work of this character. The consensus of opinion, however, is that collateral reading is a very important part of effective history teaching.

One particular merit of collateral reading is the opportunity afforded to adapt the amount of work to individual pupils. A stronger pupil can often do three or four times as much reading as the weaker pupil, and if the reading is properly directed the problem of individual differences is partially solved.

Eleven teachers report that they are so handicapped by lack of time or improper library facilities that it is impossible to do much collateral reading.

Table I shows the aim or purpose of collateral reading, as evaluated by 127 history teachers.

ORAL AND WRITTEN REPORTS BY PUPILS

One custom in the teaching of history which is worthy of special mention is the opportunity given to the pupils for self-expression through the medium of formal oral and written reports. These are usually prepared by the pupils from assigned supplementary readings. Sometimes these assignments are made to the class as a whole and sometimes topics are assigned to individual pupils. This method should be especially valuable for several reasons. In the first place, it furnishes a motive for the pupil in his outside reading. The fact that the pupil is to report to the class in a formal manner the results of his research causes him to use more discrimination in his reading. He is reading with an end in view. He is confronted with the responsibility of making a contribution to the class recitation. In the second place, the pupil is conscious of the

fact that he is doing a constructive piece of work in the preparation of a formal report. Most pupils are interested in work which exercises their constructive powers. Short oral reports on special topics are used most frequently, 125 teachers saying they require oral reports and 118 mentioning written reports; 8 teachers state that they never require written reports, while only 1 teacher states that he never requires oral reports.

a) *Frequency of formal reports.*—In 19 cases there was no estimate of the frequency of formal reports. There was great range in the frequency of required formal reports, from “daily” to “only once a year.” The answers were so varied that the only statement which applies is that there is no common practice. However, there is a tendency in many schools to hold pupils individually responsible for two or three more or less extensive reports each semester, either oral or written. In many instances oral reports consist of formal recitations of three to fifteen minutes’ duration by individual pupils. Eight teachers state that they get better results from oral reports and that very few written reports are required. The most common form of written report is a theme of from one thousand to three thousand words, once each semester, read in class by the individual pupil. However, 12 teachers require short written reports varying in frequency from twice a month to twice a semester, while 14 teachers say they seldom require written reports of any kind.

A common practice is to have shorter and less intensive papers written in the Freshman and Sophomore years, and more comprehensive and extensive reports in the third and fourth years. In the Freshman year these themes are often of a biographical nature or dealing with some pathetic or dramatic incident. One bad practice is the custom of having the reports written up in the notebooks and never discussed in class. Such a method would have a tendency to make pupils of high-school age superficial in their work, and the teacher would have no positive knowledge that they really understood what such reports contained.

[To be continued]